This Trivia Is a Circus! ~ Haley Burress, MS

Below are 30 trivia questions about the circus.

How-to & Tips:

• Write the word CIRCUS on a blackboard or flip chart to remind people what the trivia questions are all about.

• Play like regular trivia as a group or in teams. The "host" reads the clue and the group/team tries to come up with the answer. Keep score and award points if you want.

• Pause if you want and discuss a particular question or ask a follow-up question. (Some examples are below.) You might find that the activity goes in another direction.

• If people are having trouble answering the questions, give clues. Or, if you want, give a couple of possible answers.

• Bring in some props related to the activity – a red clown nose, a circus balloon, a bag of peanuts, etc.

Circus Trivia

1. What is the name of the tent where a circus takes place? (big top) Have you ever heard the expression, "under the big top"? Did you know...? There are some circus superstitions. For example, it is bad luck for a circus performer to sleep in a circus tent. Also, it is bad luck to take a picture of an elephant with its trunk pointing down. (Wonder if it is bad luck for the photographer or for the elephant.)

2. How many rings are in a traditional circus? (three) Which one is usually the largest ring? (center circle) Do you think this is how they came up with the expression "three-ring circus"?

3. Can you name the famous Disney elephant that starred in his own movie? (Dumbo) What was unusual about Dumbo's ears? (They were very large and floppy. He could use them to fly, just
like wings.)

4. How did circus performers and animals travel from town to town in the early 1900s? (They traveled by train - circus trains.)

5. The show put on by the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus is called what? (The Greatest Show On Earth!) **Discussion Starter:** Barnum & Bailey Circus is still quite popular. Would you like to share any stories about going to the circus? What circus acts do you enjoy? (tightrope walker, acrobats, clowns, animal tamers ....)

6. What are the performers who fly through the air called? (trapeze artists)

7. Which of the circus performers need to have good balance? (tightrope walkers, unicycle riders, stilt walkers) **Did you know...?** Tightrope walkers are also called "funambulists." Now, that is a mouthful! The rope has to be very strong and is typically made of steel.

8. The person who directs the circus - kind of the master of ceremonies - has a special name. What is it? (ringmaster)

9. What does the ringmaster say to open the circus? "Ladies and gentlemen and ________ (children of all ages”).

10. What is probably the biggest animal in the circus? (elephant)

11. This man (or woman!) is very brave and trains animals for a MANE event. Who are they? (lion tamers/trainer)

12. What does the lion trainer use to distract the lion so he will forget about attacking? (The trainer cracks a whip.)

13. Take a guess – how long is the current Ringling Bros. circus train? Is it 1 mile long, 2 miles long, or 3 miles long? (1 mile long)

14. What are the tall “legs” that clowns sometimes walk on called? (stilts)
15. What is a bicycle with one wheel called? (unicycle)

16. The first circus was called Circus Maximus. Can you guess where it was held? (Ancient Rome)

17. In Ancient Rome, the circus included equestrian battles. What animals would be involved with that? (horses)

18. During the cold winter months, what state is home to the Ringling Bros. Circus? (Florida)

19. Elephants love these salty treats. What are they? (peanuts) Did you know...? Another superstition from the circus says that for good luck, performers should keep a few strands of hair from an elephant's tail in their pocket. What do you think about that?

20. In 1882 (a long time ago) the London Zoo sold an elephant to the Barnum & Bailey Circus. Do you recall his name? (Jumbo) Do you know how much Barnum paid for Jumbo? Was it $1,000, $10,000, or $50,000? ($10,000)

21. What kinds of big cats might you see at the circus? (lions, tigers)

22. What sugary, spun candy treat is a favorite among kids at the circus? (cotton candy)

23. This snack has a caramel or a candy coating and is sometimes associated with autumn, but you can find it at a circus! (candy apple)

24. What fried dough treat is named after a body part of an elephant? (elephant ears) Discussion Starter: Eating at the circus is sometimes just as much fun as watching the performances! What's your favorite circus treat?

25. What treat comes in a box decorated like a circus wagon? (Barnum's Animal Crackers) Did you know...? The string was added to the box so kids could hang it on the Christmas tree.
There are currently 19 different animals in a box of Barnum's Animal Crackers. They include koala, bear, bison, camel, cougar, elephant, giraffe, gorilla, hippopotamus, hyena, kangaroo, lion, monkey, polar bear, rhinoceros, seal, sheep, tiger, and zebra.

27. Finish the phrase: "Lions and tigers and __________" (bears, oh my!)

28. What role did Weary Willie play at the circus? (clown) Was he a happy or sad clown? (sad) What was his real name? (Emmett Kelly)

29. The circus started out with exotic animals that folks could come and look at. What is the word used to describe a collection of animals for study or display? (menagerie)

30. What is a roustabout? (A circus worker who helps put up the tents.)

31. What does the "rubberman" sell at the circus? (The people who sell balloons are called rubbermen.)